Navigating Orkanen

Exploring the Spatal production of Malmö University

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Abstract

This thesis explores the application of Henri Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space to the analysis of Malmö University more specifically Orkanen, the name of one of the two main buildings of the university. With a particular focus on how conceived, perceived, and lived spaces interact within the university's neoliberal context. Through a combination of Schwarze's operationalization of Lefebvre's spatial triad, critical discourse analysis, rhythmanalysis, and auto-ethnographic inquiry, this research examines how the university's spatial design and practices reflect broader trends in neoliberal higher education.

The analysis reveals that the conceived space at Malmö University, shaped by its location in Västra Hamnen and its focus on market-driven educational outcomes, strongly influences the perceived space of students' daily practices. However, this alignment creates contradictions within the lived space of students, who often experience feelings of disengagement and lack of motivation. The university, while successful in creating a functional and visually appealing social arena, tends to reduce the educational experience to a transactional process, akin to a job, rather than an intellectually enriching journey.

The findings suggest that while Malmö University's spatial configuration supports its neoliberal objectives, it also generates a disconnect between students' academic identities and their lived experiences. This thesis underscores the critical role of space in shaping not only the physical environment of a university but also the social and emotional realities of its students. By aligning Lefebvre's theoretical framework with empirical analysis, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the spatial production of Malmö University and offers insights into the broader implications for higher education in a neoliberal age.
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Introduction

The physical space of universities is going through major changes, but its effects are not obvious. Due to an increased demand of specialization of industries driven by a global economy which prizes growth through innovation and specialized knowledge. Not many are left unscathed, not the least the requirements and expectations placed on educational institutions worldwide. Universities, commonly seen as a protected institution, can now be seen increasingly as a driver of growth through merely existing. This is affecting both the functioning and the symbolism of universities.

Universities are where knowledge and space meet, where the production of both are deeply intertwined with the institution's foundational goals and identity. Space and knowledge creation are in this way not only functional but also symbolical. While the location, design and architecture of higher education are mobilized to meet certain functional needs they also a serve the interest of the municipality in a broader sense and serve as a reflection of the history in which it has been created. These changes are cause for concern and contemplation on what universities are supposed to be, what values we want them to have and how we want them to function.

Through Lefebvre's triad, this thesis explores how the context of a university affects conceived, perceived and lived, to further understand what it means to be a student in a context like this. Can Lefebvre's theory on the social production of space be applied to Malmö University, a relatively young university in Sweden's third largest city. Through analysing the three moments in which space is produced – perceived-, conceived-, and lived space – this thesis hopes that in understanding these three moments individually we can see how they in turn interact and affect each other and thus how space is socially produced at Malmö University. Using the dialectic view of the social production of space is the framework which will enable me to analyse how universities not only generate and are generated by

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knowledge but also how it shapes and is shaped by the space and context in which this knowledge is cultivated.

This thesis attempts, from the guidance of Schwarze (2023) as well as Auto-ethnography (Anderson, 2006) to use this Lefebvre's triad in a novel to understand how the neoliberal university manifest itself in the architecture, policies and everyday student life on campus.

Originally intended as a comparative study between Lund university, a traditional university founded in 1666 parallel to the modern institution Malmö University founded in 1998, getting its official *university* "stamp" in 2018, this analysis has evolved into a more focused critique on the social production of space of the Malmö University. Through an analysis on the three moments of space with the help *of critical discourse analysis, rhythmanalysis* and *Aute-ethnography*, as well as a discussion on how these moments might relate and interact this thesis concludes that Malmö University's practical, concrete initiatives with its academia, research and education focused on market demands has also produced a university of abstract space.

Aims and Purposes

This thesis aims to understand the idea behind a university by interpreting its spatial form. This is interpreting how it is conceived, perceived and lived. Though Lefebvre's theory on the production of space is a common theoretical construct which has been applied to many different cases, putting the triad to use is much less common. The triad been applied in this thesis, ambitiously aims explore the multidimensional interplay between physical, mental, and social spaces at Malmö University. Through a mixed method approach it will recognize the multidimensionality between physical, mental and social spaces.

This thesis does not aim to deliver definitive answers or an exhaustive exploration of all spatial dimensions from all perspectives and understandings of it instead it aspires to contribute to one narrative among many, offering a critical reflection on how space is produced and experienced as a student of Malmö University. This approach aligns with Lefebvre's critical methodology, which focuses on revealing and understanding the layers and processes that constitute space, which are constantly changing, rather than providing a final or complete account of what space is (as that is impossible).

This thesis aims to theoretically explore Lefebvre's production of space and if it can be used to understand spatial dynamics and the power which has in it both affecting and being affected by society and time. It will attempt to do this through using Schwarze's operationalisation in applying Lefebvre to empirical research, together with auto-ethnography providing a new methodological approach to studying the social production of space. I argue that Lefebvre's triad, particularly lived space offers itself to be understood through personal narratives. Which means that they provide ways of enhancing each other, giving lived space a clear existing methodology to follow and Auto-ethnography a theoretical framework bridge individual experiences with structural dynamics.

The research questions which will be guiding this thesis are…

- *How well can Henri Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space elucidate the relationship between conceived, perceived, and lived spaces at Malmö University?*
- *In what ways do the interactions between conceived, perceived, and lived spaces at Malmö University reflect broader trends in neoliberal higher education?*
- *How effectively does the integration of Schwarze's operationalization and auto-ethnography uncover the dynamics of spatial production at a university like Malmö University?*

Through these research questions this thesis offers new insights into the production of space at Malmö university, focusing on how the current dominant mode of production of neoliberalism is influencing the design and location of the university, the use of it by students as well as the identities formed within it. This shift in Malmö University reflects a broader shift in higher education, one which needs to be further discussed.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 of this thesis will provide a short introduction to research on the changing nature of higher education and how it has been researched before.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework which includes the ontological nature of space as well as Lefebvre's concept of the spatial triad and the inherent critical nature of space.

Chapter 4 will present the methodology of this thesis, showing why it is relevant for understanding this case study, both by being relevant for the theoretical underpinnings but also the empirical nature of the research. The chapter is structured around explaining the three methods chosen for this thesis – Critical discourse analysis, Rhythmanalysis and Auto-ethnography.

Chapter 5 will situate Malmö University within the context of Malmö's evolution from an industrial to a post-industrial, neoliberal city. It explores the university's geographical positioning in Västra Hamnen, a symbol of urban innovation, and discusses the university's architectural and administrative strategies aimed at aligning with neoliberal educational policies. The historical and social transformations of the city are crucial for understanding the spatial dynamics at the university.

Chapter 6 will present the analysis of the data collected through the methods described in chapter 4. Each spatial moment is examined

separately at first to show how they manifest them selves differently at Malmö University. The chapter will finish with a discussion on how they interact with and contradict each other.

Chapter 7 will discuss the findings in relation to the broader context of Malmö and other research. I will finish the chapter with a discussion on method as well as also some practical implications for Malmö University.

Chapter 8 will present the main findings of the thesis, reflecting on the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of this thesis. It will end with some suggestions for further research.

Previous Research

This chapter will situate this thesis within previous research on neoliberal higher education from a critical perspective as well research in using Lefebvre's theoretical framework.

Increased demand for higher education

Higher education is becoming increasingly hard to live without, not only crucial for individual advancement but also to engage and be a part of society. (Molesworth et al., 2009). This development into what is usually termed "knowledge society" or "knowledge economy". Economies worldwide are evolving away from manufacturing- and industry-based economies to those requiring higher levels of knowledge and technical skill. The changes which universities have been going through for the past 20 years is driven by both global demands of competitiveness as well as local needs to produce flexible and employable workers (Clegg, 2008). This in turn is causing structural changes in cities and particularly universities to shift, having to increasingly compete both within countries as well as internationally to attract future students and with them new and innovative companies (Temple, 2007). As a consequence, increased pressure on the educational landscape both academically and infrastructurally as universities now more than ever are seen to be key drivers of economic development. These changes bring effects to universities core missions, changing both in the ways they teach but also the amounts of students they teach. As universities increasingly assume a central role in urban development, they are no longer solely sanctuaries for science and the pursuit of knowledge for the greater good; they now also have an outward-facing mission (Temple, 2009) mobilizing the fact that universities actively shape function and symbology of the cities they inhabit.

While higher education institutions for a long time was criticised for being an echo-chambers of their own knowledge, where academics are not using their knowledge to solve real world issues (Troiani & Dutson, 2021). Universities are being pushed to pursue other kinds of knowledge. Student world view lack of engagement with meaningful and challenging discourse impairs ability to become engaged and reflective (Natale & Doran, 2012). The increasing influence of neoliberalism on universities is reshaping higher education landscapes worldwide, impacting organizational structures, educational practices, and physical spaces. This transformation is visible through the shift from traditional scholarly pursuits to vocational training and skill-based education, highlighting a move from knowledge creation to application(Molesworth et al., 2009). Modern universities are heavily influenced by the marketizations and efficiencies of neoliberalism which is the answer to traditional issues in higher education but also creating new ones((Knights & Clarke, 2014; Lund & Tienari, 2019). Researchers like Clegg (2008) indicate that this shift fosters new academic identities, promoting a model where education is viewed more as job preparation than as intellectual enrichment. Identities become more tied to vocational practice and and performance rather than to academic knowledge or disciplines.

This change in the role of universities is affecting how they operate, not the least economically. Recent shifts are addressing these issues moving towards becoming productive in the "real world" economies. In Sweden we are seeing record levels of expenditure of capital together with record revenue levels (Lundh & Kenttä, 2023). This financial dynamic is likely due to the increasing number of stakeholders in academics due to increased cooperation with companies and corporations.

Money is being invested in infrastructure. Architecture and physical space can function as form of power (Dale, 2005). All organisations are using architecture to achieve certain effects, meaning that they use it to assert

power over users, enforcing their views of what it is to be a student. Big branded buildings which enables the city to show of the latest university buildings are becoming norm the effects of this architecture is also not fully understood (Kuntz et al., 2012). While indoors libraries are coming to resemble open-plan office space, Temple (2009) makes the comparison of Richard Florida's conception of creative city based on the idea that informal meeting spaces between different types of people fosters an innovative and therefor productive and effective environment.

Leo, in his critique of Uppsala University's latest building, published on the radical leftist website *Allt åt Alla* (2024), which advocates for the right to the city, raises significant concerns regarding the university's architectural choices and their broader implications. He argues that while the building aspires to embody modernity and technological advancement, it simultaneously erodes communal spaces that were once integral to the university experience. This loss, according to Leo, undermines the function of space as a vital area for informal interaction and community building among students. The transparency of neoliberalism, evident in architectural choices like extensive use of windows, reflects both the conceived space (the planned and designed environment) and the perceived space (how people interact with and use these environments). This, in turn, impacts the lived space, shaping students' everyday experiences and sense of belonging.

In parallel with neoliberal reforms, universities have increasingly prioritized diversity and inclusion as part of their strategic objectives. Researchers like Eveline and Robertson discuss the dual challenge and potential benefit of fostering a more inclusive academic environment. However, as Robertson (2016) argues, diversity initiatives lose their significance if they are primarily market-driven, serving institutional agendas rather than genuinely promoting equity and inclusion. This notion is supported by statistics

showing that higher education is often inherited (SCB.se), further complicating the narrative of accessible education for all.

This thesis proposes Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad as a unifying theoretical framework to analyze these different dimensions of university space. By examining the university's intentions as manifested in policies and architecture (conceived space), the ways in which these spaces are utilized (perceived space), and the everyday life experiences and identities of students and other users (lived space), I argue that a more comprehensive understanding of university space can be achieved.

While employing Lefebvre's theoretical framework as a conceptual tool is common, as noted by Leary and Madikizela, its practical application in empirical research is less frequently undertaken. Notable exceptions include the work of Zhang (2014) and Whitton (2018), who applied Lefebvre's theory of the production of space to the context of Manchester University. In his doctoral thesis, Whitton explores how the physical space of the university affects institutional, social, and individual identities, particularly during a transition to a new, modern university building. While the aims and purposes of Whitton's thesis share similarities with my own, our studies differ in key respects: I focus on students rather than academic staff, and my case study involves a different set of preconditions and methodologies.

While the use of auto-ethnography in within the theoretical framework of Lefebvre's social production of space is a novel approach, applying the methodology towards higher education is not. Increasingly this methodology has been applied to critically examine experiences of universities reflecting on bullying within academia (Zawadzki and Jensen, 2020), combining academia with motherhood (Huopalainen and Satama, 2019; Riad, 2007) or exploring the experience a neoliberal restructuring of their own university (Nordbäck et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this thesis is based on the book *The Production of Space* written by Henri Lefebvre (1974; 1991). In this chapter I aim to present my interpretation of the ontology of space as well as the epistemology of space i.e. why space is a socially produced process and how that space is process is produced.

Short Introduction to Henri Lefebvre

When Lefebvre first published his seminal book *The Production of Space* (1974; 1991) in the early 1970's it did not receive much attention, and it would take another 20 years for it to be published in its English translation (Soja, 2010). Lefebvre (1991) seeks to explore and explain how space both produced and used. Space is not merely a physical backdrop where society happens but rather is parallel to society, both producing society through mediating interaction and understandings as well as being produced by it through social relations. The ontological shift of space and the spatiality this book argued for are by many now seen as fundamental for understanding the current developments in both the urban and the global (Schmid, 2008).Lefebvre's theories provide a robust framework in many different social contexts and has informed much of the critical scholarships within the urban question and in human geography, being a main source of inspiration for authors such as Harvey, Massey and Brenner (Schwarze, 2023).

The Production of space is a critique of the splitting up of knowledge into disciplines. This theory is an attempt at working against both the structuralists assumptions and post-structuralists splitting of disciplines (Stanek, 2011). It attempts to disprove both the sociologists historical neglection of space, and the architects fundamentalist view on space to create a "general, transdisciplinary, unitary theory of space" (ibid. p.134).

Although Lefebvre was a Marxist thinker but he also added dimensions of the body and social constructivism which more accurately positions him in neo-marxism, making him appeal to both structuralists and post-structuralists (Merrifield, 1993). In that way there is such a thing as scientific knowledge, but what is scientific is always socially produced and socially situated (Soja). Lefebvre and the theory of social production of space can be situated within the broader intellectual currents of marxism, critical theory and social constructivism. It relates to critical theory in the way that one of its goals is to critique and change society, it is not enough to only explain it. This involves examining social structures to uncover power dynamics and ideologies and their role in producing space. Space, as previously imagined, is not neutral and neither exists only in the realm of the physical, it is a product of society and also affects society. Critical theory is "concerned with usefulness in praxis, especially with regard to achieving freedom from oppression and domination" (Soja 2010, p.69). Critiquing works to find contradictions between the moments.

> "[t]here can be no knowledge of society without critique of that society, of its representations (ideologies) and its accepted concepts" (Lefebvre 2002, 101).

The social production of space can also be related to social constructivism in the ways that it posits that all knowledge is constructed and situated rather than something that exists outside human reality. While favoring the spatial aspects it still acknowledges the effects of both social and time. This is why space has to be understood in its social, cultural and economic contexts as that effects how it is perceived, conceived and lived.

Ontological Considerations

To understand any theory, it is essential to understand the logical assumptions which that theory rests on, which assumptions it makes about existence and the nature of our reality (Denzin et al., 2023). These

assumptions are the logical assertions which are made about what constitutes reality, which will reflect the social contexts and relationships within which human existence is embedded.

Spatial Aspects of Ontology

Lefebvre (1971) challenged traditional social sciences ontologies for favouring temporal and social dimensions and diminishing the role of *space* or *spatiality* in understanding our common human reality What this means is that if we take the example of historical studies, the passing of time can intuitively be understood by most people as a driver of change; studying a phenomena with decades in between we can expect things to have changed because of the fundamental developmental nature of time. However, if we take the example of a geographical study, when two different places or phenomena were studied such as two cities or two cultures, their subsequent differences and similarities were thought to be of in social factors such as politics or economics rather than spatial factors. This traditional privileging of temporal/historical and societal/sociological qualities relegated space to the background, as a dead container were societal and historical events unfold. This made it impossible to produce any theories on how space affects society and our human reality.

Lefebvre argued that spatial/geographical qualities must be put forward and considered alongside social and temporal qualities as foundational to our understanding of human reality. Because space had wrongly been seen as only something absolute and physical, as a thing, and that it was more than that, This created a common misunderstanding of what constitutes (social) *space* and how it affects human reality at its most basic level. Causing spatial epistemologies and methodologies to rest on assumptions which left geographical research to be merely vivid descriptions of *things in space* rather than of space in itself, creating limitations of geographical research at the time (Soja, 2010).

Space with its physicality inevitably also has effects mentally and socially. Because space is something which exists in our social world it is a social construct and is there for constantly being produced and reproduced by human actions

This thinking of turns space from a merely thing to a process. A relational view of space, as something not only physical but something that has social relationships and mental imaginations would enable imagining space as having the power to influence and control, redirect time and society in the same ways which space is directed by them. This is how we come to understand space as a social product, it is actively being produced and reproduced by social processes but in turn also shaping them. This was a radical rethinking which led to what now is referred to as the "spatial turn" in social sciences, recognizing space as an active agent and a dynamic force in shaping human reality, similar to society and time. This then also implies that space can affect and control social dynamics in the same ways that societies have been argued to shape space.

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The material of space became the perceived space and the imaginations of space, the maps created and so on became the conceived space. The last moments became the lived space which rested on the assertion of humans being spatial beings always tied to space meaning we will always be affected by but in turn also affect space. Space is never created but always recreated.

The Production of Space and the spatial triad

Definition and Role of Epistemology

With increased ontological character given to spatiality, with the relational perspective of being physical, social and mental, constantly produced and reproduced in the world, in society and our minds and imaginations, gives further implications as to how to understand that new reality. Geography can no longer be solely the study of maps or the study of highly descriptive conditions of the landscape. This section will introduce the epistemology of Lefebvre, which includes how space is produced i.e. the production of space in three moments (perceived space, conceived space and lived space) of the spatial triad.

With this Lefebvre (1991) wanted to move beyond the descriptiveness of traditional geography. By redefining space as not only a product but also a something dynamic and constantly changing it also implies a shift in how we interact with it and subsequently how it is studied. Space as a process is space consisting of social relationships. It then becomes impossible to study space through solely the traditional abstract descriptions such as maps, paintings or images. An infinite amount of maps and geographical descriptions would be needed to explain anything, and then these would just a moment later change. It depends so much on the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed and the scale which is used (1991, 86). Moving from traditional geography, where knowledge was based in description, Lefebvre instead argued for knowledge coming from critique

based in social reality based in material and ideological forces which shaped human realities and understandings.

The Social production of space and the spatial triad

As space exists mentally and socially at the same time as physically this also makes space into something which has the power to affect and change society. Space the becomes political and shaped by social relationships which necessitates critical perspective is needed as to not take for granted the way space is understood. Critiquing comes from the belief that another reality is possible and that where we are now in history and our collective and subjective social imaginations are fleeting moments which will inevitably come to pass.

Lefebvre meant that the physical, mental and social aspects of space also made space to be something which was socially produced in three moments; a dialectic (or trialectic) relationship of three moments which makes up all (social) space: Conceived space, perceived space, and Lived space.

Perceived space

Perceived space is the dimension of space where it is an empirically observable thing, material and physical, a product, similar to the taken for granted views of space. Perceived space is not only the physical but also encompasses how people engage with that physical space, understanding how space is utilized by its users. It includes the observation of routines, the movement of people, and the general use of space which contributes to its character

Perceived space is the mediation between the "later" conceived and lived moments. Meaning perceived space is a thing but this is only one dimension of it.

Conceived space

Conceived Space is the dimension which is conceptualized by those who plan the construction and design of space, usually a task given to scientists, planners and architects. Lefebvre (1991) means that this moment is never neutral but because space is a symbol it is a tool of thought and action also and thus a means of control and domination. How the architects want people to behave, they direct people and behaviour, although it always escapes them, they will never be able to fully control space and the responses it creates (Milgrom, 2008). This means that while architects might be under the impression that they are in control of the conception and design of the space in question, instead it is always a result of the current mode of production. This space exists not mainly in the physical or material, though it has effects here, but instead imagined through plans and documents, through discourse and drawings.

"The dominant form of space, that of centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates[…] and it seeks, often by violent means to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there" (Lefebvre 1991, p.49). Conceived space is the space with most power over society, although it does not hold all the power, and the control which this space has is often beyond the control of those conceiving it (Leary, 2009). More on this and the design of abstract space can be read in (Milgrom, 2008)

Conceived space in a capitalist society is abstract space, a space which sees no qualitative difference, where all is rendered homogenous reduced to a quantitative measurement. This is because of the dominating powers of capital which appropriates space using property laws, money, power, technology and mass media. Space is seen as homogenous in the eyes of capital and its simplification from use value to exchange value (Merrifield, 1993).

Lived space

Lived space is the space of our imaginations and experiences. It is the images and symbols which are directly lived and made sense of by the users. This space exists mainly in our minds although it can sometimes be expressed through artists who want nothing more of space than to merely describe it. Claiming to ever be able to attest for these with writing is impossible as it is the space which is directly lived, and this lived experience can never be communicated without also be given new meaning, as a representation of lived space. Lived space is unique to everyone and can be seen almost as the filter which overlays physical space, a filter which is constantly changing and constantly different (Leary, 2009).

Spaces of representations "images and symbols" that might be coded or uncoded, verbal or non-verbal. It can be either the images and the symbols or the ways these are understood as symbols (or not). The lived space is highly subjective but can also exist in shared imaginations of space. It is seen as the dominated space because it rarely has the energy or power to make a difference, resulting in a complacency, in complying to ideology. Resistance against the conceived manifests mainly in smaller acts of revolts against conceived.

Lefebvre conceptualises a space in which the lived is not subjugated against the conceived space. This creates a *differential* space, a space in where it users should have a meaningful role in the decision making. In the same way as conceived space creates Abstract space it is lived space which has to ability to create the counterforce – Differential Space. The way Lefebvre envisioned the resistance to abstract space, was through advocating for *the right to the city*, a space where the lived space is dominant, that is complex and meaningful, with social interaction and cultural expression (Neary, 2014).

Implications for this thesis

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I argue that this understanding of space can offer insights into the production of space of universities. If space is not only physical but also social and mental, and always being reproduced, what are the practical implications of this when doing empirical research on a university. The university space goes beyond a building or multiple buildings of a campus and becomes everything between the Campus, university in the city, an organisation, a company, individual buildings, libraries, classrooms and the halls and corridors between them.

> *"if it (the spatial triad) cannot grasp the concrete… its import is severely limited" (Lefebvre 1991, 40).*

As Lefebvre points out, it is crucial that the spatial triad not only be treated as an abstract model, rather it should be use in the real world. The study of the social production of space needs to be separated into the three moments of the triad. Although space is a dialectic of all three, its research and analysis necessitate separation to be able to understand how they interact, intersect and contradict each other.

The spatial triad does not come with a set of readymade tools or methods which can be applied in or to any of the situations which one might find themselves in. This can be seen as a weakness of the theory or a strength as it opens for a study of the complexities which the theory aims to capture. This has led to there being many different interpretations of Lefebvre's spatial triad and how to understand it both epistemologically and methodologically.

Methodology

Introduction

As both Schwarze (2023) and Stanek (2011) point out, there are hints as to how Lefebvre might have thought his ideas be used, in the empirical work which he himself conducted. It is through these reading that Schwarze has created a framework for empirical research, and it is this which will be guiding methodological framework for this research.

Schwarze argues that Lefebvre's theories can be operationalized *through critical discourse analysis, rhythmanalysis* as well as *narrative interviews.* This framework and methods are not to be read as an absolute totality of Lefebvre's theories rather as an open interpretation, "through dialogue and reasoning" (ibid, p.78). It is also with this comment in mind that I will add my own interpretation – through dialogue and reasoning – to the method, changing *narrative interviews* for the somewhat similar but also very different *analytical auto-ethnography* as guided by Leon Anderson (2006).

Malmö University is both the context of this research and a context which I myself as a researcher and student am a part of. My personal connection to the case is in this thesis argued for as a strength, is none the less a circumstance which must be handled to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. Auto-ethnography through its focus on the self, is a form of research which tackles the questions of biases and subjectivities and is also a novel approach to the operationalisation of Lefebvre's spatial triad (more on this later).

Positionality Self-Reflexivity

I want to begin this chapter on methodology with reflecting on my positionality as a researcher. I must critically examine how my identity, experiences and perceptions both shape and are shaped by the spaces I

inhabit and study. This reflection is foundational not only for the *auto-ethnographic* aspects of this thesis but also aligns with Lefebvre conception of space; "[t]he social production of space is a subjective process" (Schwarze 2023, p.101). This is my attempt at being transparent with my own positionality and biases.

All the moments of the triad have in some way been understood through my subjective being. Starting with the most obvious - lived space, the space that is directly experienced, it is imbued with emotions, memories and imaginations, making it highly subjective. In this thesis I will also use my emotions, memories and imaginations of Malmö University necessitating reflection as to understand how my identity and its cultural and social context affects my engagement with the university space.

Perceived space being both the material as well as how we interact with the material space it is deeply connected to the scale of our bodies. This makes it necessary to critically reflect on how I engage and affect my physical surroundings.

As with conceived space being how those in power, such as planners and architects imagine space. As it is the belief of this thesis that no knowledge exists outside of society and human relations it is also the belief that this knowledge is always social and therefor situated. I can therefore not tell the story of *the* conceived space of Malmö University, only *a* story of the conceived space of Malmö University.

Through my experiences as a student at Lund University my positionality has directly affected the results of this thesis, but my positionality as a white male student of critical human geography will undoubtedly also indirectly affect the results. Through my positions as a white male, affect my ability of being in space without fear. Being aware of this is both a privilege as well as it affects how I fundamentally understand space.

Me, William, a human geography student currently at Lund University. My relationship to Malmö university is short as I Only studied there during the elective semester of my master's program during the autumn/winter 2023. My experience of Malmö University are my own subjective understandings they will inevitably be filtered through my own previous experiences of being a university student for the past 5 years. In the analysis I have used my experiences of being a student at Lund university as a point of departure, a point of reference to which I can compare similarities and differences.

I too believe that being Swedish affects the experience of being a student in Higher education. Apart from being a culture which shuns voicing opinions too loudly the fact that higher education is a highly publicly available right to all citizens also inevitably affects our perspective on it. It both being free and it being the norm to accept state-funded financial support it might make us less likely to resist and just accept the situation as is. This could explain why there are not many signs of resistance toward the present state of higher education.

Critical Discourse Analysis – Reading the Conceived space

Conceived Space is the space which is imagined, planned, and envisioned symbols with meaning which shapes space which are not neutral rather produced by those in positions of power (Lefebvre, 1991). It is this understanding which will inform the decision to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore how space is represented and ideologically constructed at Malmö University. Critical discourse analysis will allow for a reading of both the symbols and signs in the written text as well physical space by university management as well as how they assert ideological power and control.

As Schwarze (2023) notes, in Lefebvre's 1973 study *Language and society* we can see his views on language and how it is similar to space. Schwarze

argues that this creates possibilities for CDA to be applied A methodological approach focused on uncovering social inequalities perpetuated in symbols such as the written, language and other discourse, with the aim of creating change Fairclough's (2013) understanding of language parallels Lefebvre's in many ways. They both see language is a social practice that has the power to change and control people. Although one is linguistic, and one is spatial they are both symbols and signs which articulates ideas. Further Lefebvre argues that language and space share their nature of being socially produced and are both made up of three dimensions (ibid). Through Fairclough's approach to CDA both discursive and non-discursive elements can be analysed**.**

Fairclough (2013) created a three-dimensional model for critically analysing discourse which been used in this thesis. These include 'discursive practice*',* where discourse is analysed based on how it is produced, distributed and consumed. The production of a text looks at how texts are created within social and cultural contexts and examines how they make use of that, relating to norms, discourses and other social structures. This could be how academic texts might often use formal language and social media posts use less formal language to relate to the social context. Distribution of texts is how these texts are shared with society, both in which media they are spread but also who it is intended for. Consumption of text is how reader might interpret and decode the symbols which the texts convey, that different people may affect or be reacted to differently by different audiences.

The second dimensions is 'text' where the linguistics such as words and sentences are analysed. The third dimension is the broader 'social practice' where both discursive and non-discursive elements (such as physical space) are analysed.

Critical discourse analysis is a useful method when wanting to understand what it is that someone is trying to actively convey.

Purpose and role in this thesis

Critical Discourse analysis has been applied to texts and documents on Malmö University's official website as well as non-discursive symbols such as architecture, images and logos. Apart from the direct branding content on their website (www.MAU.se) the analysis also includes strategic documents and other public statements. This analysis is aimed towards revealing broader socio-political agendas and power dynamics that these texts reflect.

Data Sources and Analysis

In the Critical Discourse analysis of this thesis, the selection of data sources has been strategically focused on publicly available documents from Malmö University's official website. The documents available on the university's website, such as strategic plans, policy documents and promotional materials, are readily accessible and represent the institutions public-facing image. This approach was adopted for several reasons, these sources are particularly useful for understanding and analysing how the university intends its space to be understood by its users, namely its students but also the public. These documents and other materials are created to communicate the university's priorities and values to a wide audience, making them key signs for understanding the institutional narrative and ideological framing of space. Priority based on accessibility of the sources was also in-part due to the limited timeframe to both read and analyse discourse with the other methods applied. While selecting these public documents does not remove from the methodological rigour of the study other narratives and understandings could have been found, both from delving deeper into how Malmö University historically has portrayed themselves but also if another researcher were to read them.

Rhythmanalysis – Seeing the Perceived Space

Perceived space is the material and physical space which is observable, as well as the ways in which people engage and appropriate space (more on this in Chapter 3). This moment needs a method which can capture both the materiality of space as well as how people experience and make use of that materiality. Henri Lefebvre himself offers a way of observing this, through what he calls rhythmanalysis(Lefebvre, 2013).

Rhythmanalysis involves using all five senses to observe rhythms of space, these rhythms are "everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time and expenditure of energy…" (Lefebvre 2013, p.25). These rhythms manifest themselves in two primary forms: linear and cyclical. Linear rhythms, characteristic of the logic of industrial production are the structured patterns of modern societal functions such as the nine to five work routines. In contrast, cyclical rhythms are those of nature, the ever-unique fluctuating patterns of life which still echo in our lives, where the seasons of the year are just one of infinite examples (Schwarze, 2023). To effectively study these rhythms there needs to be a balance achieved between immersion and detachment from the space you study. Lefebvre description of this could be interpreted both literally and metaphorically through studying the street from "the balcony" – close enough to feel the rhythms but still far away enough to observe them from the outside. This enables the researcher to both observe the physical nature of perceived space as well as the social context in which they exist, which through being there necessitates taking part of one cannot fully separate themselves from what they study.

In every social space there are norms of what is deemed proper engagement with space and what is not. These norms are everywhere in society and affect everyone differently. Perceived space is not only an observation of materiality and activity but also how those activities conform to or challenge existing norms of present time. This connects perceived space to both the human body in using it and observing it, meaning a that the researcher is always present, as well as necessitating historical/social

context. The act of walking might serve as an understanding of the complexity of perceived space. Walking is not only about the physical paths available but also involves a social context and different meanings given to different types of walking. It can be a Sunday stroll or a protest march, a hurried walk during rush hour, each influenced and in turn influences space.

Perceived space is a complex interaction between physical and social aspects of space and social practices. In a university setting this dynamic can be observed through examining how students negotiate and redefine space through the everyday practices of being a student at Malmö University.

How I did it

As for me the study of the perceived space of students of Malmö University came both from recollecting memories, feelings and sensations of me myself being a student there as well as – to my best attempt – separating myself from the context and studying how other students were interacting with the campus of Malmö University, and through doing so trying to understand if there were any acts of resistance towards the norms in the library.

Auto-Ethnography – Sensing the Lived Space

Again, Lefebvre himself offers little indication of how to understand and grasp lived space, the space of everyday life, an elusiveness which opens for new ways of creatively understanding it. To understand the lived space of Malmö University this thesis will move away from the Schwarze suggested method of narrative interviews by and instead conduct *analytical auto-ethnography*. Due to my personal connection to the research context of this thesis – Malmö University – changing the approach will enable a deeper, reflexive examination of how space is experienced from the

viewpoint of a student as well as avoiding any of the biases that conducting interviews would have created.

Auto-ethnography is the study of a social context in which the researcher themselves are a part of and has also been referred to as *auto-anthropology, auto-biographical ethnography, auto-biographical sociology, self-narrative research* (Anderson, 2006). While narrative interviews – as suggested by Schwarze - are effective for capturing *external* experiences within a given social context (Schwarze, 2023), analytical auto-ethnography allows for *internally* exploring the subjective and intersubjective experiences of everyday life and the way these intertwine with social and spatial structures (Anderson, 2006). Lefebvre's emphasis on the complexity of lived space, the emotional space of symbolic interaction with the spatial, calls for a methodology that can both capture this depth together with theoretical reflection. I argue that auto-ethnography is effective in studying lived spaces as it is defined by Lefebvre.

Anderson (2006, p.375) defines the analytical auto-ethnography as *"ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena"*.

Utilizing analytical auto-ethnography (AE), this methodological approach does more than capture personal narratives, it enables an examination of how these experiences are conditioned by broader social structures. By integrating Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory, this methodology extends beyond individual reflections to engage with overarching spatial and social dynamics at the university. This approach facilitates an exploration of how space shapes academic identities and practices, allowing to connect personal experiences with wider trends in higher education. A major difference between auto-ethnography and traditional social sciences and in particular ethnography is the visibility of the self. This relates to the previous point on the analytical reflexivity in that we cannot

disregard the effect we have on the context we are studying and pretend that it does not exist. This methodology accepts this and uses it to its advantage, allowing for deeper…

Nordbäck (et al., 2022) applies comparative auto-ethnographic research to combined experiences of being academic workers during the stressful of a merger at Aalto University, Finland following a restructuring of the organisation. Using Auto-ethnography in research in university studies is not a new concept though using it within the theoretical framework of the social production of space is a novel approach.

In analytical AE the concept of analytical reflexivity is important, this is where the researcher acknowledges and reflects on their own necessary connection to the research situation and their effect on it. The position of the self is one of the biggest complexities with the analytical auto-ethnographic approach, navigating this dual position as both researcher and research subject. Being part and having an effect on what we are studying is by Lefebvre discussed in connection to rhythmanalysis where the optimal place for conducting rhythmanalysis was "from the balcony", which can be seen both literally and as a metaphor, describing the act of being where we somewhere between of being there but still not. Meaning that we will inevitably affect and be effected by what we are studying.

The analysis method used to understand the narrative interviews used by Schwarze is documentary method based in reconstructive research. This is an analysis method which uses multiple interviews to compare between them and create narratives. Similarly, to Schwarze I will, through informal conversations with fellow students, be able to identify common and differing experiences and emotions toward student life at Malmö University. Lefebvre (2002 p.107) speaks on doing this in his book where the sociologist "will disengage himself [sic] from his own subjective elements, ridden himself of them by calling them into question. As far as possible, he will free himself from the social contexts upon which he depends". The aim of reconstructive

research suggests that reality is socially constructed, empirical research is needs to extrapolate this reality.

The data collected includes personal memories and reflection as well as informal conversations with fellow students. The feelings, emotions and experiences will be limited to those tied to the physical space and routines of being a student at Malmö University, during the winter of 2023 until spring 2024. Being part of the university allows me to access the subtle otherwise missed or overlooked aspects of university space. Personal insight combined with additional insight from other students will add a valuable dimension to the everyday experiences of space. As I want to make clear but as Anderson also points out, a characteristic of the analytic auto-ethnographic agenda is to contribute to insight of a broader set of social phenomena than only personal experience. This method is through constructing my own experiences in the everyday life of Malmö university which I have then asked other students/friends to comment on.

Case Study Approach

This thesis follows a single-case exploratory study which is specifically useful for getting a comprehensive understanding of complex issues (Denzin et al., 2023). The case was chosen because of the context in which it is placed, both because of it having been connected to an extensively studied history being an extension of research previously conducted in Malmö (see Holgersen, 2017; Listerborn, 2017; Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012; Pries, 2020) as well as my personal connection to it. Because the study is only on one case there are issues of generalisability, which means it is challenging to apply empirical findings of other cases.

Limitations and Validity

Methodological limitations

While qualitative research methods are rich in detail and depth, they also carry with them inherent limitations which need to be reflected on before making any claims or drawing conclusions (Denzin et al., 2023). Qualitative research methods are instrumental in providing insights into complex social phenomena from a human centred perspective however it also brings with it some challenges and limitations. Biases in the researcher's perspectives, beliefs and prior knowledge can and will influence all stages of the qualitative researcher process. From the framing of the research questions to data collection and analysis.

Understanding and addressing the limitations of a research study is crucial to ensure the credibility of its findings, making sure claims are not over extended. This section explains how limitations highlighted in the above section have been addressed in this thesis. The aims are to acknowledge these limitations while arguing for the robustness of the methodology used in that it aligns with the study's goal of providing critical insights into space rather than any definitive answers.

Qualitative methods usually involve context dependant findings which makes it hard to generalise the findings. The methodological approach of this thesis is based in a mixed method approach integrating critical discourse analysis, rhythmanalysis and auto-ethnography to capture a comprehensive examination of the diverse dimensions of space.

Background

Malmö and the University

Although favouring a spatial perspective Lefebvre highlights the importance of situating the case both historically and socially. As history and politics are factors shaping space and vice versa, this chapter serves as one telling of these factors and the way they relate to what is being explored in this thesis. This chapter begins with a short introduction to the city of Malmö, Sweden's third largest city and its post-industrial transformation, situating the creation of Malmö.

Transformation of Malmö – A history

Today Malmö municipality identifies itself as a knowledge city, a significant transformation from its longstanding history as an industrial port city, with sectors such as textiles, metalwork and shipbuilding (Holgersen, 2017; Listerborn, 2017; Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012; Pries, 2020). During the 1950's through the up until the oil crisis in the 1970's, Malmö was one of Sweden's largest industrial growth regions. However, since the mid-1990s the city has undergone a fast post-industrialisation process. This context is what sets the stage for the founding of Malmö University, which was from the municipality's perspective part of a broader plan to transitions from a fordist-keynesian industrial city to a neoliberal post-industrial city (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012). This transition occurred against the backdrop of two decades of slowly stagnating and disappearing industries following the global oil crisis. While Malmö's initial response to the shifting financial landscape was slow, from the 1970's to the 1990's with this relative stability to the golden post-war years of the 1950's and 1960's, when the changes finally came they were fast.

It was around 1995 that the city started to reinvent itself. With the help of national tax-reforms and a strong majority elected local government which had support from the opposition the municipality had all the power needed to make big changes and initiate a transformation (Listerborn, 2017). It was these following years which would lay the groundwork for the reproduction of Malmö into what the city is today.

Part of this development involved rebranding Malmö as a *knowledge city*. The new mission was to attract companies and a population which could enhance the city's tax base even more (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012). To support this agenda there was a need for a highly educated workforce which the city at the time did not have. Out of the many people unemployed in the city only 17 percent had the qualifications necessary to work for the new jobs created by incoming companies (Holgersen, 2017). In the 2000 Comprehensive Plan the municipality explicitly emphasized a need to attract smaller companies and to accelerate the education and recruitment of skilled workers (ibid.).

In Malmö between the years 1998 and 2014, jobs in the manufacturing industry were cut in half, dropping from 17,000 to 10,000, which put the city at half that of the national average (Holgersen, 2017). It seemed the city had finally gotten rid of that top three placement of industrial cities in Sweden, and by 2005 the municipal plan openly and proudly described themselves as a knowledge city. Although, when looking closer at this, Holgersen (2017), could not find many reasons as to why Malmö would be more of a knowledge city than other similar cities, suggesting this might be a way for the city to position itself through branding.

While the postwar era in Sweden meant investing in infrastructure to build housing, the neoliberal development saw the construction of new identities brands, both symbolically and physically. Malmö stands out in the way that it uses building new infrastructure as a way to naturalize these new narratives for the city (Holgersen, 2017). Florida originally described the

process of branding as mainly symbolically building a story or a narrative. In Malmö these stories are also naturalized in the physical environment through buildings, roads and other infrastructure, turning these abstract concepts into concrete "realities". This resulted in multiple high-end construction projects subsidized by the municipality such as the *"The glittering glass towers of the growing Malmö University campus, Santiago Calatrava's 54-story residential Turning Torso project along the waterfront, the stretch of old docks being renewed to connect Bo01 to the Central Station and, perhaps most significantly, the massive mall–arena–train station–office park Hyllie only a few minutes from the newly opened train and car bridge to Copenhagen"*(Pries 2020, p.259).

These projects were accompanied by different narratives such as "event city", "sustainable city" and of course "knowledge city". The "Sustainable city" was naturalized through Västra Hamnen. A very successful construction in that it put Malmö on the map but a less successful project in that it has proved to not be as sustainable as it was first imagined. This allowed for an attraction of creative class without common need for strictly lowering taxes.

Mukhtar-Landgren (2012) identifies a standard story which the city portrayed in a series of brochures during the early 2000's. Here Malmö is a "knowledge city" which was constructed with the University, the city tunnel going under the city together with the Öresund bridge, which was to connect Copenhagen in Denmark together with Malmö and Lund in Sweden. It was with these constructions that Malmö now was a knowledge city both physically and conceptually. The dual approach of narrative construction together with building new infrastructure highlighted by Västra Hamnen and Bo-01 warrants closer scrutiny regarding the impacts that the materializations might have especially those connected to the same place and time, such as the university.

Malmö University

My vision was that when visitors come to Malmö, they should <u>not</u> be met by a large crane of Kockums, instead, they should see Malmö University. That is how we create a new image of Malmö; with a university center in the city.

This quote comes from Illmar Reepalu who served as the Council Chairman of Malmö from 1994 to 2013 (Listerborn, 2017). The statement shows the how the municipality imagined this university changing Malmö (Ivarsson & Persson, 2015).

FIGURE 2. THE "FIRST" UNIVERSITY BUILDING

When Malmö university first opened its doors in 1998 it was not yet a university rather a "Högskola", often translated as "university college" in English. This term typically refers to institutions that focus more on teaching at the undergraduate level, and is also less focused on research than a traditional university. Malmö Högskola was originally four educations managed by Lund University, located in Malmö, but eventually got written over to their own university.

FIGURE 3. THE TWO UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS "NIAGARA" (ABOVE) AND "ORKANEN" (BELOW)

The university's role in the centre role in transition of Malmö became obvious when the two new buildings (see figure 3) opened in Västra Hamnen, putting them on the front page of Malmö both metaphorically and literally speaking. The first of these buildings, Orkanen, opened its doors in 2005, followed by Niagara in 2015 (Malmö Universitet, 2024). As can be understood the municipality did not only imagine them as places where education took place but they were architectural statements, materializing the shift towards a knowledge-driven economy. The shift from 'högskola' to university eventually came, though not without speculation about the questionable conditions behind it (Forsberg, 2016).

Analysis

Introduction

In previous chapters, the theoretical framework and methodology for this study were outlined, setting the stage for a detailed analysis of the three moments of Lefebvre's spatial triad. Through applying these, this chapter dissects the *conceived-*, *perceived-* and *lived* space of Malmö University, applying different methodology for each moment with the aim of showing each of their distinct roles within the production of space.

The Conceived Space of Malmö University has been examined through a Critical Discourse Analysis, showing how discursive and non-discursive material such as official documents and architecture produced in and by the University can be read to understand the ideological underpinnings of the university space.

The Perceived Space has been examined through using *Rhythmanalysis* and observes rhythms of student activity at the university, assessing the physical space and how it is used and engaged by both students and other users.

The Lived Space has been examined through an Auto-ethnographic methodology exploring my personal experiences in-, and emotional responses to Malmö University. This method provided insights to how space is felt which can contrast with the intentions and the actual use of space. Lived space, representing the personal and often covert experiences at Malmö University, will be approached through an exploration of my own experiences as a student, contrasted with my time at Lund University. This personal narrative aimed at highlighting the subjective realities of student life that often escape more structured analyses.

The analysis chapter will start with the conceived space and finish with the lived space.

The Conceived Space - Reading Malmö University

Intro

This chapter uses Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as instructed by Schwarze (2023) to analyse selected texts as well as the materiality of the physical space that are central to the public image of Malmö University (MaU). Fairclough and Lefebvre share similar understandings of language and space as bearers of meaning and capable of change, as well as power this makes analysing them through critical methods fitting. Conceived space is as defined by Lefebvre the space of the planners and architects. Malmö University's thoughts on space, manifested in both official documents as well as in the physical space will be analysed through critical discourse analysis. The analysed material are the two strategy documents (Strategi 2022 and Strategi 2025) as well as the two main university buildings Orkanen and Niagara at campus Universitetsholmen located in Västra Hamnen, Malmö. When the interior architecture is being mentioned it is the interior of Orkanen, as well as the library in Orkanen. The structure of this analysis will follow the three dimensions posited by Fairclough – text, discoursal practice and social practice.

Through discursive practice

Discursive practice examines the processes through which discourse is *produced*, *distributed* and *consumed* and how these practices relate to other already existing discourses. At Malmö University, the discursive practices not only involves text but also strategic use of physical space. is how the university positions themselves as producers and how they see the consumers of their "product".

All the texts analysed in this study are published by Malmö University, which positions the institution as both a narrator and an architect of the city's transformation narrative. The university actively crafts and controls the discourse around its impact on transforming Malmö from an industrial city to a knowledge city. This is not only a recollection of history but used to enforce the university's identity as both a forward thinking innovative and change-bringing institution, bring actual change.

Discourse through architecture

Both the discourse used by Malmö University as well as the placement and architecture of the university suggest the university's role of redefining the city's identity. This is the story which the municipality together with the university is trying to tell, turning the university into an economic engine and the city into a knowledge economy on a global scale.

There is a discursive practice in which the look and placement of the campus and the buildings of the campus are made to be a part of the landscape of offices. There is a message being both sent out outwardly but also Inwards towards the students and other people working at the university. This is not necessarily something negative but might just be a means to an end, which is something good. This makes it important to look more into the activities of the university and the affect they are having.

When looking at who the buildings seem to be created for it seems that much of the architecture is intended not for traditional student activities such as reading and writing in silence, rather it seems to be aimed towards facilitating the creation of social networks. This is visible in the library being a social arena and the lunch area being an area not mainly for students in the building but office workers in the area. More on this in later sections.

Through text

Through an analysis of text which looking at textual discourse but also non-discursive discourse such as symbols and images. This includes their context as well as choice of words and structure of sentences. This analysis explores how Malmö University uses textual representations to create their conceived space i.e. construct the identity and goals of the university. Text will be how Malmö conceives of and describe themselves through their website and two strategy documents.

University identity and goals

Malmö University is an innovative, urban, and international university that contributes to the development of society. This is visible in our research, our educations, and our collaborations with other actors (Own translation. Malmö Universitet, n.d.)

As in the above example Malmö University frequently uses terms like "innovative" (nyskapande), "urban" and "international" across its official communications. These terms are not merely descriptive but can be seen as to be containing ideological meaning that aligns with the university's overall goals of being a progressive and cosmopolitan university. The choice of the words reflects a strategic positioning aimed at distinguishing the university within a competitive landscape of higher education.

Together with others, we want to create, share and disseminate knowledge to understand, explain and develop society. Both locally and globally. As a natural consequence of this, most of our students are in subject- and profession areas and with high societal relevance. (own translation. Malmö University, n.d.)

Furthermore, the emphasis on "samhällsutveckling" (societal development) highlights its engagement and cooperation with actors outside of the academic community both locally and globally. This dual focus is presented as a "natural reason" (naturlig följd) for most of their programmes being

educations with high societal relevance. The use of the term "natural" could suggest that the only way of moving society towards a better place is to cooperate with corporate actors and to have educational programmes with vocational focus.

The educational programs of the university include dentistry, nursery, graphic design, city-development are esteemed by the university for their high societal relevance. This reflects a commitment to public good and underscores an educational philosophy which prioritizes practical, real-world impacts over abstract theoretical knowledge. However, this focus also suggests a potential commodification of education, where academic value is increasingly measured by immediate economic or social utility, potentially sidelining disciplines such as arts and humanities that do not directly align with market demands or immediate job market needs.

This focus on immediate economic or social utility may lead to curriculum which is influenced by current trends or corporate interest. For example, In the Malmö University strategic plan for 2023-2025, the development of AI is heavily cited as something which the university has to adhere to (Malmö Universitet, 2022). This focus on emerging technology is both an education which is dynamic and responsive but might also lead to an education which lacks theoretical knowledge.

At Malmö University there is also a range of choice between levels and lengths of education, both undergraduate and graduate programs ranging from 1-year to 2-year, both at school and distance learning, both full-time and part-time options. Education is accessible for as many people as possible which also shows in who decides to study at the university.

> *"We are convinced that openness and inclusivity enrich our diversity. Proof of this is that two out of three students at Malmö University are first generation academics"* (own translation. Malmö Universitet, n.d.*)*

Diversity seems to be a point which Malmö University constructs their identity around, visible not only in this statement but also in an exhibition on display at the café area in the library. In an exhibition in the middle of the library which is called "I. You. We. – perspectives on identity constructions" asking questions such as "Who are you?" "What are your identities?" "Where do you come from?" "Where are you heading?". More than showcasing research produced by the university using diversity in this way can be seen as an identity construction themselves through living up to social expectations. This can at least be the case for the quote from the website(?). As to the exhibition the main consumers to it can be expected to be people who are already students at the university, which makes it more likely to be aimed at creating identity and discussions between students regarding their identities.

Branding and symbolism

FIGURE 4. MALMÖ UNIVERSITY LOGOTYPE THROUGH THE YEARS. RETRIEVED FROM [WWW.MAU.SE] ACCESSED MAY 1, 2024

On their website the university constructs the story behind the university's logotype which plays a significant role in their branding strategy. The M visible in todays logo (see figure 4) was chosen because of its multiple meanings (MAU). Representing not only the "M" in Malmö, but the M in the logotype has also been designed to both resemble a bridge or on its side, resemble and "E" for Europe. The university is seen as a bridge from Öresund to Denmark and the rest of Europe, further showing the university's

role as more than just an educator. The university also claim that it was a close decision between the current "M" logo and the griffin which is also used by the municipality. The "M" eventually won, claiming that it was not as easy to mix up with any of the other institutions or corporations in an around Malmö also using it, as well as wanting to be less "provincial" (own translation). This also ties into the desire to project an expansive identity which as many people as possible can relate to, not only the students.

Through social practice

Analysing discourse as *social practice* is where both discursive and non-discursive elements are put in relation to each other (Fairclough, 2013). This section will explore: the ideological messages embedded in the physical space i.e. architectural design and the placement of Malmö University. Looking at how the ideological underpinnings as well as the goals of the University identified in the text be related to the physical development of the campus. This section argues that the architectural choices as well as the location of the campus are materializations of the values described earlier, such as openness and transparency.

Location and Architecture

Malmö University's strategic location in Västra Hamnen can be seen as a materialisation of its alignment with narratives of innovation and sustainability. This area, known for its transformation from an industrial to a knowledge and innovation hub, symbolically and materially links the university to the broader neoliberal agenda of urban redevelopment. With its proximity to businesses and other institutions this location further enhances the view of the university's role as a driver of societal change through facilitating engagement with external actors, a clear goal of Malmö University. The choice of location can be seen as a deliberate move to embed the university within the economic and social fabric of Malmö creating connections which move beyond the traditional academic boundaries.

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The university space especially from the outside could be seen as to resemble office settings. This can be seen as a materialisation of neoliberal educational ideology which sees market readiness as part of the education. Being in an office environment could be seen as a part of the education, making students prepared to transition into working life post-graduation. This might shape the view of education as task-oriented, focused on efficiency rather on quality.

FIGURE 5. VIEWS FROM THE LIBRARY. TOWARDS THE STATION (ABOVE) TOWARDS THE URBAN RENEWAL (BELOW)

Looking from the inside to the outside the positioning of the library in the middle of the city, students get offered diverse views: one side faces the waterfront together with the central station as a symbol of the centrality of the university in proximity to the transportation hub (see Figure 5). To the other side you overlook a landscape over newly finished and still in-construction apartment complexes and office buildings, a testament to being in the middle of the urban regeneration.

The university's architecture, characterized by office-like buildings with extensive use of glass serves a physical manifestation of neoliberal educational ideologies. The office-like design choices promote student to be engaged with spaces that promote market readiness, preparing students for corporate environments. The open and transparent architectural style can be seen as wanting to encourage openness and collaboration. Other effects of this can also be creating a space which lacks freedom and is fostering surveillance over fellow students rather than academic freedom.

The presence of a lunch restaurant predominantly frequented by non-university personnel, such as local business employees, suggests a blurring of boundaries between university space and public/commercial space. This utilization speaks to the university's role within the city's social and economic ecosystem but raises questions about the accessibility and inclusivity of university facilities for its primary users—students and faculty.

The "Openness" which the university described in their mission statement can also be seen as to manifest itself in the physical space of the university. The architecture could be seen as to promote a sense of transparency and openness to influence the social practices of being at the university. This can encourage more collaboration making it into a more integrated and interactive academic environment. It might also impact privacy and create a culture where constant visibility is both expected and normalized.

Exhibition

The placement of the diversity-themed exhibition "I. You. We." within the university library is particularly telling. Ostensibly aimed at fostering discussions on identity among students, its location and content could also be seen as a strategic reinforcement of the university's identity as diverse and inclusive. However, the abstract space of the exhibition, coupled with its thematic focus on identity, may also serve to standardize student

experiences and dilute individuality, reflecting broader trends in neoliberal educational institutions towards homogenization.

Concluding remarks - Conceived space

The analysis of the conceived space at Malmö University shows that the university embodies Lefebvre's notion that conceived space manifests itself following the dominant economic and ideological conditions of society. We can see in the case of Malmö University it reflects broader neoliberal agenda which is influencing higher education globally. In situating the campus in the economically revitalized district of Västra Hamnen, Malmö university aligns itself with contemporary urban development strategies which favour innovation and economic integration. This architectural and spatial positioning is not only a backdrop but is actively shaping the education offered at the university. Conceived space at Malmö University is shaped by its administrative decisions and architectural design which promotes a modern, inclusive and practical educational environment. The campus space is defined by its position in the middle of the city, on the front page of Västra Hamnen its one of the first buildings you see stepping out of the train station. Its architecture is defined by its size, the open layout, large glass windows and panels as well as flexible use areas aimed at fostering cooperation, accessibility and adaptability rather than traditional library values such as privacy and calmness.

The intentions of creating a university which is responsive to the global and local market and societal needs, emphasising practical application and education which are linked to employment and market readiness, are visible in both discourse and space. Malmö University provides an educational model which prioritizes marketable skills and practical knowledge over traditional academic knowledge, creating a conceived space which serves the economic and political interests of dominant forces.

Perceived Space - Seeing Malmö University

This section will be a description of what it means to be a student at Malmö University shown through how students engage with physical space. An exploration into the perceived activity of being a student at Malmö University through the method of rhythmanalysis. What separates perceived space from conceived space is its focus on *actual* use instead of *intended* use.

A day at the Malmö University

Malmö university library is characterised by its grand, modern, open-plan architecture, with windows towering from floor to ceiling on all sides of the building, with additional skylights that fills the library with abundant natural lights, creating a sense of openness making the library feel both vast and vibrant. However, this architectural choice has a dual effect, it not only enhances the visual connection to the external environment making the scenery a part of the room but also contributes to both auditory and visual backdrops. The hard faces echo sounds and now that summer is around the corner the sun provides more than preferable amounts of light and heat. On particularly sunny days, leads to deployment of massive electrically operated blinds which span the entire height of the large windows. This removes the overwhelming brightness but inadvertently also warms the space, turning the library into a warm no-longer-open room with high energy, an environment less than ideal for longer study-sessions.

FIGURE 6. VIEW FROM THE LIBRARY

The whole library is a huge room divided only by a few walls but mostly by rows and rows of bookshelves serving as both as storage of knowledge but also makeshift walls that delineate the space. The library's layout is effectively a grid divided by the bookshelves (See figure 7.). These partitions create different segments of use dividing the room into corridors for walking and corridors were tables and chairs are set up for studying. The library is divided into three distinct zones: "a quiet zone" for studying alone, a "café" area near the entrance and central atrium as well as an unmarked place for what we can assume is "normal" studying as the purpose is not written on the walls. Each zone has its own "rhythm" which fill different purposes.

FIGURE 7. LAYOUT OF THE LIBRARY

The university library feels and moves more like a meeting place, a place to socialize and share ideas, to interact rather than to sit in private and study. Observations throughout my time spent at the library in Orkanen reveal that during the hours in the middle of the day the group study rooms are consistently occupied, highlighting a strong demand for secluded collaborative spaces, which there are by no means a small amount of. The more open individual study areas see fluctuating use, peaking around mid-day. It's evident that many students use the library not just as a place for academic endeavour but also as a social venue, indicating its dual role in the university's life.

FIGURE 8. TABLES FOR TEAM-WORK.

The atmosphere in the library is generally upbeat, with students appearing engaged and at ease. The study norm of Malmö university seems to be loud, which causes clear rhythms to be felt, making you part of something bigger. The openness can be connected to monitoring where students are through the openness of the landscape in the architecture being disciplined and regulated both by themselves and by others. This is noticeable not the least in noticing the energy of exam-season: a rhythm which repeats itself each month closer to exams where students collectively, intentionally and

unintentionally move and talk more quietly. A rhythm more noticeable in a space where students interact more.

However, the lack of personal space and the constant noise could be expected to be overwhelming for some. The constant visual as well as auditory impressions could be inhibiting for people who prefer calmer and quieter environments for studying. This could be seen as a non-issue in a modern society which extensively uses noise cancelling headphones, pointing to an expectation of self-regulation of one's auditory experience.
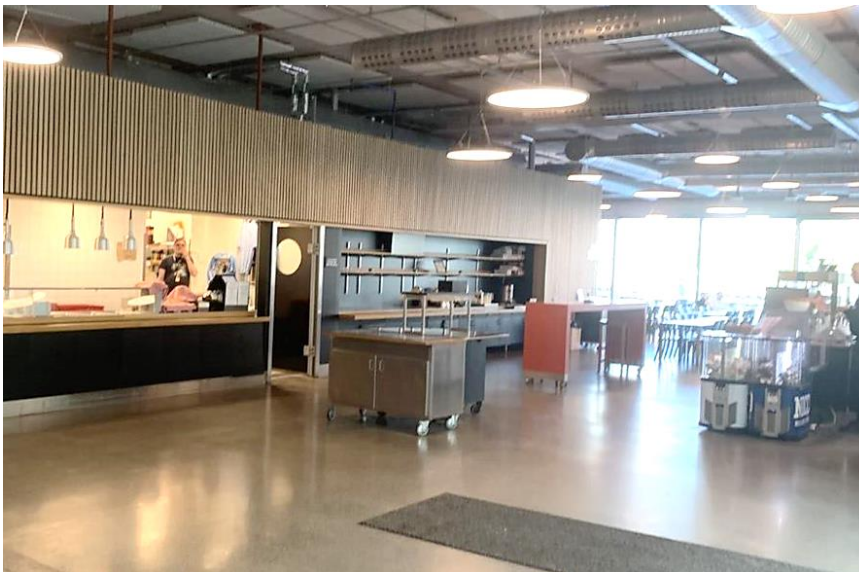

FIGURE 9. EATING SPACES (OWN PHOTOS)

Every day at noon small areas on the second and third floor get crammed by students all wanting to heat their food in the microwaves. This linear

rhythm of students moving about highlights both a strong Swedish tradition of "matlåda"(food from home) and the expensive lunch restaurant on the bottom floor. The university does seem to give more space to eat lunch for the lunch-restaurant at the bottom floor. While this does engage the university campus with more "outsiders" as they seem to be the ones eating there it does cause students to have to share smaller areas for lunch, making it stressful and a fight everyday by the microwaves! Eating lunch is hard because of lack of space, meaning people go against the rules of not eating in the library. There are signs at every table instructing not to eat there, but lack of space anywhere else makes this into somewhat of a norm (see figure 10).

FIGURE 10. "NO FOOD ONLY DRINKS" (OWN PHOTO)

Concluding remarks - Perceived Space

Perceived Space includes the sensory experiences of the university, what it looks like and how it is used. This architecturally modern and open university creates a lively area with a lot of social movement and engagement. However, the resemblance to corporate office with its open plan architecture leads to interactions which feel more professional and less

personal. Spaces can be seen as visually appealing but also impersonal, and the sense of overwhelming sound and noise are close at hand. The end experience is a homogenized and generic experience which highlights inclusivity and diversity with the cost of individuality and personality. In Summary, the library at Malmö university is a multifunctional space which could be said to support the academic and social needs of its students. However, its open plan design and use of huge glass windows, while brings energy and vibrancy also poses challenges in mitigating noise.

The activity of being a student which is observed through engaging with the community. The activity of being a student at Malmö University fits into how society values it.

Lived Space – Sensing Malmö University

Lived space is (in this thesis defined as) the experience of space. In this thesis this is mainly auto-ethnographic combined with narrative interviews for triangulation. This section will be an exploration of Malmö University through my own perspective and emotions with the additional insights of fellow students which served as ways to confirm, deny and discuss my own experiences. Me, William, a human geography student currently at Lund University. My experience of Malmö University are my own subjective understandings they will inevitably be filtered through my own previous experiences of being a university student for the past 5 years. In the analysis I have used my experiences of being a student at Lund university as a point of departure, a point of reference to which I can compare similarities and differences.

My experiences of Malmö University

During my third semester at Lund University, deciding between the options of internship and elective courses, I felt the need for more tangible practical knowledge following my heavily theoretical coursework. The academic part

of me felt shame for this feeling and attitude towards knowledge but the other part of my brain anxious about the future also knew that my knowledge of the urban planning occupation was lacking. This was a stress which motivated me to apply for courses at Malmö University — a choice driven by a desire for practical application that Lund's theoretical rigor thus far had not satisfied.

This architectural openness extended to the faculty's spaces too, in comparison with Lund's hidden corridors and inaccessible offices for teachers and other staff. Malmö's, glass walls and visible offices blurred the boundaries between students and professors, fostering a sense of accessibility and familiarity in contrast to the professors.

During my time at Malmö University I noticed a contrasting educational philosophy to what I was used to, it was deep dive into the concrete which I had been missing. Lund University with its long history, has an atmosphere which was still one of tradition and introspection together with impressive architecture and pride being defined by academic rigour. In Lund the courses encouraged us to dream big of changing the current structures in society and read and theorize on radical changes that promised actual change in the world. While this is intellectually stimulating and inspiring it could also feel like utopia, unreachable. This created a mix of both inspiration and frustration, wanting to learn and read everything about the possibilities that exists but at the same time a nagging feeling or thought in the back of your head reminding you about the how complicated the world is and how much it would take for these grand ideas to ever make it out of mere theory.

In contrast, my semester at Malmö University was one which seemed directly coloured by the demands of the job market. The skills and knowledge we were learning were related to the challenges that actual municipalities in and around the region I was currently in were grappling with today. All assignments and all lectures were geared towards solving

everyday problems in our immediate surroundings. While this practical focus was what I wanted, I found myself struggling but this time in an unexpected way. The pragmatic approach of easy solutions to easy problems removed the motivation I had found and relied on in Lund. While it felt gratifying and moralising to grasp and tackle problems which felt somewhat closer to what my eventual career is going to be, I missed the shifting perspectives and philosophies in Lund, no matter how little use I felt that I might have of them in 5 years.

I was grateful for having experienced both the inspiring studies in Lund and the directly applicable well packaged education in Malmö. There was a freeing feeling of not having to base every argument on the concrete rather making argument about the abstract. Malmö gave a sense of direction, making the connection between what I am studying and a future career clearer, but at the cost of actual motivation and inspiration. Though, despite the practicality and inclusiveness of Malmö's design, a part of me missed the traditional halls of Lund. Lunds legacy of academia visible in the architecture was something that Malmö's modern efficiency couldn't replicate. As pointed out by my friend when I was going through these aspects Malmö also offers a different kind of belonging—one less tied to tradition and pride tied to more pragmatic and contemporary needs.

It was these two very different academic environments which made me reflect on both of their spatial and educational philosophies. Malmö's layout, geared towards practical engagement, seemed to mirror its curriculum's focus on real-world application, while Lund's commitment to theoretical depth was mirrored in its more conservative, introspective physical layout.

Another noticeable contrast is the seeming lack of social activities there contrasted with my experiences in Lund. During my semester there I only just found out that there was a student pub, I still do not know where it is. The people I studied with mainly seem to hang out with people they already knew from outside school.

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This semester of transition was not just about changing locations; it was about questioning what kind of knowledge I valued and how the spaces I learned in shaped those values. Reflecting on this, I realize that while the modern, practical spaces of Malmö University facilitated a different kind of academic engagement, they also left me longing for the deep even if impractical, scholarly connections that Lund's storied buildings inspired. But it is not without resistance that I have been struggling writing a thesis about a subject I am personally interested in rather than something which might have been easier.

Concluding remarks - Lived space

The experiences and the emotions felt as a student in the lived space of Malmö University are complex and at times contradicting. One the one hand the practicality and inclusivity of the Malmö University works, making you feel like a part of the rhythms of the library, but it is only when you step out of it you realize this is created without having to interact with anyone. There is also a feeling of impersonal… There is an appreciation for the clear effort put into the planning as well as the practical comfortability of modern amenities which work, there is at the same time a feeling that what we are doing is not so important, we are just here to do what we are supposed to do. The university facilitates professional growth but might not facilitate personal development or social integration. There is a tension going on between the image of the university and the identity of the student(s).

Discussion

This will be a two-part discussion, the first part will be an uncovering of the mediation between the moments of the triad and the second part will be comparing the results of both the analysis and discussion to previous research.

Uncovering the mediations

"[t]he true theoretical problem […] is to relate these spheres to one another, and to uncover the mediations between them" (Lefebvre 1991, p.298).

It is the understanding of Lefebvre and this thesis that it is the interplay of these three moments where space is created. With my three-part analysis I have understood each moment by themselves, as Lefebvre points out in the above quote, it is of equal importance to connect these moments to again product this process. And while there is no direct causal relationship it is understood that the conceived holds most the most power being the space which dominates the two others. This is done through seeing both where the intertwine and interact in ways which make them hard to separate, but also in ways they contradict and work against each other. they interrelate in sometimes conflicting ways.

The conceived space at Malmö University promotes a modern, inclusive and practical educational environment. Strategically located in the heart of the city, on the front page of the economically revitalized district of Västra Hamnen the conceived space of the campus embodies ideals of the prevailing mode of production as suggested by Lefebvre. Just as the neoliberal development of the city created the university the university also embodies these ideals, emphasizing efficiency and practical application. The architecture is created to facilitate cooperation and adaptability moving away from traditional academic values of solitude and privacy. These

decisions reflect intentions to create a university which is responsive to local and global market demands as well as societal needs, showing the changing position of universities.

This focus on diversity in the identity could also be connected to the abstract space of the university, creating as space which diminishes and dominates the qualitative differences of lived space.

The perceived space or the spatial practice - materiality of social practice - in a university setting becomes the materiality of student practice. The perceived space at Malmö University echoes the commodification of higher education which the dominant conceived space is creating. Just as the architectural design is open and inviting the university is open. Students are engaged and cooperating with each other, discussing their schoolwork. This creates a student life which…. This openness also engages other people to be in the buildings, if it is to eat in the restaurant or to work in the library, it is not only students using the space. Though there is an openness and social energy in the library it does not seem to extend outside the library or the campus. When students are finished with their studying they return back to their normal lives. There seems to be a distance between engaging to personally with student life, studying is seen more as a job, a means to an end in receiving a degree, which makes personal engagement such as non-school activities or being passionate about what you are studying no longer necessary. Creating an abstract identity in abstract space which appeals to a broader audience, is more flexible, creating economic efficiencies and easier adaptability. It also aligns with a globalized standard of education, making it possible for Malmö University to project an image of modernity and progressiveness to attract stakeholder, partners, educators and students, but at the cost of motivation and sense of community.

The lived space at Malmö University as experienced personally present the complex and contradictory feelings and experiences in modern higher education. University has become mainly a means to an end as well with a

wish to study something we are personally interested in. The university experience becomes filled with contradictions. University is on the one end supposed to be something which feels efficient in getting us where we want to go, the reason for studying is to after be able to get a job, the road there should be without bumps. But then there is at the same time the feeling of wanting self-fulfilment and personal engagement and motivation to do a good job. While the university is physically comfortable, filling practical needs of students it also feels impersonal, reducing education to ticking of boxes aimed at professional preparation rather than personal engagement and creating knowledge. The modern university's drive to create workers makes for an efficient education in terms of market readiness but this comes at the expense of personal engagement. This is seen through an increasing view of being a student as a job, something you must do rather than something which is self-fulfilling, engaging and motivating. This creates a student life which is limited beyond the space of the university, where when you go home you leave your identity as a student as well.

While the university library functions as a social meeting place, where students are encouraged to engage with each other no matter if they are in the same course or not it does not encourage any sense of place or community building. This shows how as Lefebvre suggested with conceived space that while the planners and architects can envision the university space to foster cooperation and being a social meeting place the abstraction of the space also hinders community formation to form. This highlights the complex nature of production of space, where the intended function can paradoxically create the reverse. Another contradiction visible in the production of space is how abstract space, created because of conceived space in a capitalist society creates an opportunity for Malmö University to position itself as diverse and inclusive. We this this positioning both in the exhibition and in them using the fact that two out of three students are first generation students.

Malmö University in the city

Examining Malmö University as a case is just a way of analysing just as splitting up the moments is a way of analysing. And just as the moments cannot actually be separated Malmö University cannot be separated from the rest of the world. "The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers -and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space" (p.87). Just as Malmö University and the campus is a part of the bigger city, the city of Malmö is also part of bigger scales. A simple explanation as to why Malmö university is the way it is might just be because of the neighbouring university in Lund. While Lund is a 350-year-old traditional university Malmö was first founded through adopting the dental and nursing education from Lund which was already located in Malmö, it was through these which Malmö University later came to fill a demand Lund could not.

If we zoom out of the delimitations it becomes obvious that Malmö University is part of processes outside of itself. The first obvious is to connect to the university having a part to play in the municipal plan of changing the narrative. Placing the two new modern buildings of the university at the front page of Västra Hamnen helped bring legitimacy to their new innovative and sustainable district as much as has helped the university to be located there, close to the actors the want to cooperate with. Making the university the part of the municipal plan of shifting Malmö into a knowledge economy (Holgersen, 2017).

In the same way university space can both be a consequence of what the university imagines itself to be. Space can also shape what the university is. What is the history of where it is located, how has space enabled or "disabled" the university to be where it is. Through this analysis we can very much see that Lefebvre most basic assertion that space is alive and both affecting and being affected by society. This shows how space cannot be separated from the other spatial context in which it exists.

Conclusions

This thesis examines how Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space elucidates the relationship between conceived, perceived, and lived spaces at Malmö University, revealing complex dynamics influenced by neoliberal ideologies. The conceived space at Malmö University is characterized by a strategic design that aligns with the university's goals of fostering marketable skills and meeting job market demands. This space manifests itself in a perceived space that supports spatial practices reinforcing these neoliberal ideals, such as informal learning environments that prioritize innovation and practicality over traditional academic pursuits.

However, the issue arises within the lived space of students, where this alignment creates feelings of disengagement and lack of motivation. While the university functions effectively as a social arena during the day, fostering cooperation and interaction, the lived experiences of students often reflect a detachment from their academic identities. Students tend to treat their university life as a job—something they participate in during the day but leave behind at the end, indicating that their educational engagement is driven more by necessity than by personal interest or intellectual curiosity.

Schwarze's operationalization of Lefebvre's theory has proved to be a fruitful methodological framework, effectively aligning the three moments of the triad, conceived, perceived, and lived spaces, to analyze the spatial dynamics at Malmö University. This framework, combined with auto-ethnographic inquiry, has allowed for a nuanced exploration of how personal experiences as a student are situated historically, socially, and spatially within the neoliberal context of the university.

Through a three-part analysis including critical discourse analysis of Malmö University's official discourse and architecture, rhythmanalysis of student spatial practices, and auto-ethnographic reflections on personal

experiences,this thesis has demonstrated that while the conceived and perceived spaces at Malmö University are in harmony, they contradict the lived space. The problem identified by Lefebvre is that urban society creates abstract spaces, which are homogeneous and valued primarily for their exchange value. This is evident at Malmö University, where the conceived space is heavily influenced by neoliberal ideals, leading to a lived space where students experience a lack of purpose and belonging.

The university's location in Västra Hamnen, a symbol of urban innovation, and its educational model focused on marketable skills, reflect this abstract space. While this space is visually appealing and functionally effective, it leaves students feeling unmotivated, as their educational journey becomes a means to an end—a product to be completed rather than a process of intellectual growth.

By integrating Schwarze's operationalization with auto-ethnography, this thesis has uncovered how neoliberal policies and practices shape student activities and identities at Malmö University. The combination of these methods has revealed that personal narratives offer more than anecdotal insights; they expose how the social production of space within the university conditions the lived experiences of students. The interplay between conceived, perceived, and lived spaces at Malmö University not only reflects the dominant mode of production but also highlights the importance of aligning architectural designs with the lived realities of university life. This analysis deepens our understanding of spatial dynamics in higher education and underscores the critical role that space plays in shaping student life and institutional identity.

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